

God's Guidance (Proverbs 3:5-6)

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An old sailor repeatedly got lost at sea, so his friends gave him a compass and urged him to use it. The next time he went out in his boat he followed their advice and took the compass with him. But as usual he became hopelessly confused and was unable to find land. Finally, he was rescued by his

friends. Disgusted and impatient with him, they asked, "Why didn't you use that compass we gave you? You could have saved us a lot of trouble!" The sailor responded, "I didn't dare to! I wanted to go north, but as hard as I tried to make the needle aim in that direction, it just kept on pointing southeast."

The old sailor was so certain he knew which way was north that he stubbornly tried to force his own personal persuasion on his compass. Unable to do so, he tossed it aside as worthless and failed to benefit from the guidance it offered. If we are not careful, we can do the same thing as this sailor. We think we know the right way to go and have made out our own plans to move in a certain direction. But the truth of the matter is this, we really don't want to follow God's compass or His guidance for our lives.

When it comes to our everyday lives, we discover in Proverbs 3:5-6 that God does promise to guide His people. In this study we are going to see the importance of following God's spiritual guidance for our daily lives and the decisions that we must make in life. We should want to possess God's guidance and direction as we move through life. In fact, we need God's guidance for our daily decisions and the bigger decisions that we will need to make. Many Christians go through life forgetting or failing to understand that God wants to guide and direct their lives. Our Lord has not left us alone to find our way! He has promised to give us His spiritual compass or His guidance and assistance so we can stay on the path that He has ordained for our lives.

Proverbs 3:5-6

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”



If we were to take a survey today and ask each Christian what their favorite verse or verses would be, I’m sure that many would choose Proverbs 3:5-6. They take these as their “life verses” which have grown to mean a lot to them. But what is the exact meaning of these verses? In short, they are teaching that God wants to give His children guidance and direction.

Leonard Ravenhill

“Men give advice; God gives guidance.”

God has promised to give us guidance in life when we walk by faith and surrender to His will and purpose for our lives. Now let’s state our main truth for this lesson in a very clearly manner. Prop: God wants to guide our lives.

I find great comfort in this truth. Don’t you? Like a compass, God truly wants to direct my life and help me to navigate through life. I don’t have to go through life alone. God is constantly with me to guide and help me in the decision-making process, so I can follow His will for my life.

God wants to guide our lives. This is seen in two ways.

I. In preparing ourselves to receive God's guidance.

If we are going to receive guidance from God, we must prepare ourselves by walking in faith and surrendering to God's plan and will for our lives. Yes, God has a plan or blueprint that He wants us to follow but we must take the preparatory steps to discover His will. How can I make the right decisions in life? How can I know what direction God wants me to take? How can I be sure that I am following God's will for my life? Although there are various guiding factors that we could consider that are related to receiving God's guidance in life, such as the Bible, Holy Spirit, wisdom, and personal obedience, Proverbs 3:5-6 spells out some general but important lessons about receiving God's guidance.

The Bible promises in the end that "he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6) but how do we get to the place where God can guide and direct us? How can we know that we are on the path God has for our lives?

God's word tells us how to prepare ourselves to receive guidance.

A. We need to possess faith in God – 5a

The writer now explains faith.

➤ It's a simple faith

The expression "trust in the Lord" is a call for simple childlike faith in God to lead and direct our lives. Faith is a prerequisite to receiving God's leading or direction. If we express faith in His personal character, His promises, and providential ways over our lives, we can be sure to receive direction from the Lord. If we really don't believe that God knows what He is doing, that He has the right to rule our lives, and the ability to lead us, then we won't receive His direction and guidance.

Trusting in the LORD (Jehovah or Yahweh – the eternal, self-existent God) will enable us to get through life's demands and trials. After all, if Jehovah, the great and only true God of the eternal ages of time cannot help us through life, then nothing or no one can. Many times we place our trust or faith in other people,

philosophies, and quick fixes but lose sight of solely trusting in Yahweh for strength, hope, and our future.

Our life should be characterized by faith in God if we are going to be led by God. Jesus said, "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). We can trust in God to lead us in the right way and the best way for our lives as we walk by faith. God's direction or leading is centered upon our faith in what He is doing in our lives right now and also what He wants to do with our lives in the future.

Reflect on this for a moment. If we are not trusting God to lead us today in His providential purpose and way for our lives, then we surely cannot trust in Him to lead and guide us in the future. So we must trust in His leading and direction for today and the future. The proverb is asking us to trust God right now to do what is right with our lives, to bring about His purpose with our lives, so that we are ready to trust in Him for His future guidance and direction. I won't have faith in God to lead me tomorrow if I am not trusting in His providential leading over my life today.

Psalm 23:3 promises: "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Psalm 27:11 says, "Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies." Yes, God wants to lead us, but it takes faith to get us into the place of blessing where God can lead and direct our lives.

Trust in the Lord! Our God can be trusted! Our God is utterly dependable! Why can God be trusted? God can be trusted because of His character (who He is). First, God is truthful. His character makes it impossible for Him to lie ("which God, that cannot lie" – Titus 1:2). God will never lie to us! He can be trusted to do what is best for our lives and guide our lives in the way of truth. Second, God is love. His love is so limitless that He can never be unkind to us for "nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:39). Therefore, God can be trusted to do what is right and best for our lives since He loves us.

Third, He is consistently holy. Since this is true, God will not direct our lives in a way that is wrong ("Be ye holy, for I am holy" – 1 Pet. 1:16). This means God can be trusted to direct us in a right way. Fourth, God is always good and therefore will not withhold anything that is good for our lives. He can be trusted. Psalm 84:11 declares, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory:

no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Don’t allow Satan to convince you that God is not good (Gen. 3:1). God is always good..

Fifth, God is also faithful; therefore, He can be trusted to guide our lives! Lamentations 3:22-23 says, “It is of the Lord’s mercies (forgiveness, renewal, revival, strength, health) that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” For all these reasons God can be trusted to guide our lives. Trust is basically faith in action. It takes faith, a lot of faith, to get through life. But we can place our faith or confidence in the One who can be trusted, who loves us with an everlasting love, who is holy, good, faithful, and who wants to bless our lives. I can trust a God like this!

Preston Moore said:

“God will never let us go, never let us down, and never let us off.”

We have a great big, wonderful God, a great big, wonderful God, a God who’s always victorious, always looking over us, a great big, wonderful God! We can trust Him. We must trust Him! Have you been trusting in His guidance to lead you today and for the future? Are you open to His guidance? Are you ready to say to God: wherever, whatever, and whenever?

We are called upon to “Trust in the Lord” in the ups and downs of life, through thick and thin of life, and on the mountaintops and in the valleys. If we are going to receive God’s guidance, we need to possess faith in God – His person (who He is), promises, power, and providential ways over our lives. It’s a faith that knows God will guide and direct us in the ordained path He has for our lives! We need to open our heart to God and in faith truly seek His guidance for our lives.

➤ **It’s a strong faith**

The proverb goes on to talk about the intensity of our faith when it states you are to trust in God “with all thine heart” (Prov. 3:5a). This means that we need to possess an intense faith, an unshakeable faith, a strong faith in the Lord to guide us and bring His purpose to pass in our lives. We must trust God with all of our heart! Anything less is actually an insult to God! A double heart and divided mind is almost as bad as no trust in God at all! James 1:8 says that “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” If we remain steadfast and strong in our faith, God

will guide and direct our lives in His will on a daily basis, as we face life's demands and decisions and ask for His direction in life.

The intensity and strength of our faith is only realized when we pass through the deep waters of trial and difficulty. But it's here where faith blossoms and only when we pass the faith test can we expect God's direction and leading. The point seems to be this. We need to possess a childlike unwavering confidence in God's love, wisdom, and faithfulness as we pass through the trials, twists, and turns of life. We must believe that God knows what He is doing with our lives.

We must keep on believing that God is in charge of our lives, leading us in His ordained path for our lives today. Once again, if we don't have faith in God's providential direction over our lives today, then we won't have faith that He can and will direct our paths in the future. Faith in God's providential purpose today prepares us to receive His guidance for the future. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart."

The term "heart" might be understood as the computer chip of our human existence and lives. It means that we are to trust God with all our inner being (mind, will, emotions)!

When the football team goes out on to the field the coach normally says, "Give it all you got!" Our faith in God is to be like this: we must give it all we got! We must trust in God with all of our heart! Our trust and confidence in God must be intense, unwavering, and committed no matter what befalls our lives. We must have complete confidence in God, that He will guide us, even through the tough times of life and the hard decisions that we must make.

God expects us to grow during the dark, dreary, and difficult days, believing that His sovereign direction and purpose is always right. We must have faith that God is still guiding and directing our lives, according to His ordained path, even when those times involve intense suffering and difficulty. This kind of faith and acceptance prepares us to follow God's guidance and leading for the future, whatever it might be and wherever it might take us.

There are two Bible personalities that had to totally trust in God with all their hearts. Of course, there are many more than just two, but these come to my mind.

a. Job needed to trust God during a time of tragedy.

God wants us to possess great faith or confidence in Him so He can lead and direct our path, even when it involves tough times! Poor old Job is a classic example of someone who needed to trust God with all of his heart. Job had to trust that God had ordained his path and was leading him through an intense time of suffering and tragedy. Yes, he believed that God was still in control, still on the throne, guiding his life, and had ordained his path even when facing severe tragedies in his life.

Job 1:13-19

“And there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell *upon them*, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”

The amount of suffering that Job went through seems extreme but God kept His hand on the thermostat. Job lost his family, fortune, and fame. He lost it all and yet the Bible gives this amazing record of Job's heart and life.

Job 13:15

“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.”

God sometimes leads us through the valleys and difficult paths. But we must believe that He is still guiding and directing us, according to His sovereign plan, when the journey is difficult. Job was willing to trust God with all of his heart during a very difficult time of his life. As a result, God showed the next phase for his life. We must learn to trust God’s purpose and direction for our lives today so we can know and accept His direction for tomorrow.

Psalm 139:9-10 declares:

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”

Have we really been trusting God with an unwavering and undying faith? Are we ready to trust God when financial difficulties come and when a family crisis or illness hits? We don’t know what tomorrow holds for us, but we do know that God holds tomorrow in His hand and that He has a plan for our lives to follow. Yes, God knows all about tomorrow for He holds it in His hand! God has gone before us as our Shepherd and inspected the path before us and ordains the path for us to walk upon (Psalm 23:1). We can trust Him! No matter what befalls us. God can be trusted.

We need to trust Him through our present COVID outbreak. We need to trust Him through the socialist nightmare we have been experiencing in this country. We need to trust Him when the bottom drops out of our life. If we cannot trust in God’s sovereign will during the difficult times, then we won’t be ready or prepared to trust in His providential guidance for the future.

Friend, we must believe that God is still in control and directing us even during times of tragedy and great difficulty.

“It’s not an easy road we are travelling to heaven,
For many are the thorns on the way.
It’s not an easy road, but the Savior is with us,
His presence gives us joy every day.

It's not an easy road; there are trials and troubles,
And many are the dangers we meet.
But Jesus guards and keeps, so that nothing can harm us.
And smoothes the rugged path for our feet.

No, no, it's not an easy road.
But Jesus walks beside me and brightens the journey,
And lightens every heavy load."

Job trusted God in spite of tragedy, and he knew that God was guiding his steps through the very difficult season of his life. His faith in God during his difficulty prepared him to receive God's future guidance and direction for his life.

b. Moses needed to trust God during a time of testing.

Moses also had to trust God with all of his heart. He had the Egyptians to his back and the water to his front. The situation seemed hopeless! This is sometimes true in our own personal lives as we face very difficult situations. It seems hopeless and we feel helpless. If the children of Israel went backward the Egyptians would kill them. If they went forward the sea would drown them. You have heard his expression of being between a rock and a hard place. Well, God's people were between the Egyptians and a watery grave. But notice the faith of Moses.

Exodus 14:13 reveals:

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."

This is trusting in God with all of your heart! Moses had trusted God to direct them, and God showed them the way to go which was straight through the Red Sea! Maybe God has a Red Sea that He wants you to walk through in your own life? Do you have the faith to do it? Do you have enough trust in God to walk through the difficult path with Him?

Trust God! Cast your faith upon Him, believe that the Lord knows what is best for your life, and let Him have His way with your life. If we are going to receive God's

guidance we must trust Him and have faith in His plan for our personal lives today, what He is doing with our lives right now. We must believe that God is always loving, faithful, and good and will guide us in the way that He wants us to go.

“When we walk with the Lord
In the light of his Word,
What a glory he sheds on our way!
While we do his good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey”

Oswald Chambers once remarked:

“It is a great thing to be a believer, but easy to misunderstand what the New Testament means by it. It is that we believe him; whatever happens we will hang on to the fact that he is true. If we say, ‘I am going to believe he will put things right,’ we shall lose our confidence when we see things go wrong.”

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart!” We must be intense and unwavering in our faith or confidence in God, that He knows what He is doing with our lives and therefore can direct us in the path He has ordained for us.

“I’ll sing through the shade and the sunshine
I’ll trust Him whatever befall
I sing for I cannot be silent
My Father planned it all.”

God wants us to have a growing and confident trust that He can lead and direct our lives. We must trust in His providential guidance and leading at all times – today and tomorrow. We must believe that He is providentially directing our lives today in every situation that we face and that He will also guide our lives in the future to fulfill His perfect will for our lives. We cannot get to point B (“he shall direct thy paths”) without starting at point A (“trust in the Lord with all thine heart”).

God’s word tells us how to prepare ourselves to receive God’s leading and direction. We need to possess faith in God. But there is another preparatory step we must take.

B. We need to personally surrender to God – 5b-6a

Here is God's advice on the subject of surrender.

➤ **Don't rely on your own reasoning – 5b**

The Bible goes on to say, "and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5b). We sometimes get in the way of God's guidance. We think we have a better plan and way. The word "understanding" speaks of our own reasoning and thinking on the matter. However, what we think doesn't matter; it's what God thinks that matters! But if we are not careful we can deceive ourselves and think that we are receiving God's guidance when in reality we are following our own path. This is talking about the danger of self-deception! Our faith in God's purpose for our lives is interrupted and put on hold when we start trying to figure things out on our own and take matters into our own hands!

Instead of waiting on the Lord (Ps. 37:7, 9, 34; Isa. 40:31) for His guidance in some matter, we take the initiative to make or force things happen so we can call it God's leading or will.

Instead of possessing faith in God, we sometimes complain and ask, "Why Lord? Why did this happen?" We conclude, "I think it would have been better this way. I think it will work better this way." You are not God, get over it! The Bible gives us timely advice when it states: "lean not unto thine own understanding." Don't deceive yourself into thinking that your path is better or the correct path. Your ideas and circumstances may look good and sound good, the grass may seem greener on the other side, but what you are about to do may not be in the will of God.

A handsome and fancy shoe often pinches the foot. It looks good but it doesn't fit very well. Some things that look good are not always a good fit for our lives. Beware of self-deception or leaning upon your own reasoning, thinking, or understanding. Don't whitewash yourself!

A Chinese Proverb states:

"A whitewashed crow soon shows black again."

Another old Proverb says:

“A knot in de plank will show through de whitewash.”

You can't hide the true nature of something. Don't deceive yourself. Don't try and create your own path in life. We must get rid of our own reasoning before we can follow God's reasoning! We must abandon our will before we can know God's will and guidance for our lives. We fail to trust God when we begin to try and figure out things for ourselves! Many of us could say, “Been there and done that!” We don't receive God's guidance when we begin to doubt God's provision or inject our own fleshly thinking into the picture.

We can say, “The Lord led me to do this” but we might be doing something contrary to God's plan and purpose for our lives. God is often used as a scapegoat for the many bad decisions that His people make. Many times, it's not the “Lord leading us” but the flesh leading us! It's our own human reasoning on a specific matter and not God's true guidance. Why do we sometimes confuse God's leading with our own fleshly desires? It's because we are already leaning in the direction of our own reasoning and understanding.

Years ago, I built a long and rather large bird feeder with wooden legs. One of my parishioners said it looked like a coffin! After about 6 months the feeder came crashing down. Why? It's because the legs had sunk in the mud, and it eventually toppled. The bird feeder was leaning in the direction that it fell! The same is often true of our own personal lives. We fall in the direction we are leaning! This is because we are leaning on our own understanding and ideas instead of allowing God to truly guide our lives. Ultimately, we want, what we want, and not what God wants for our lives. Beloved, we are called upon to “trust in the Lord” and not our own foolish heart and direction.

Proverbs 28:26 says:

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.”

We are often tempted to think that our way would be a better path to go, or our decision makes more sense. We have it all figured out. So did Jonah. He had already purchased his ticket and his boat already picked out, but you know what happened to Him!

Jonah 1:17

“Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”

We must remember that when we intend to go our own way, Satan will often tempt us with paths, which look right, so it appears we are taking the right course and direction for our lives.

Jonah 1:3 reveals:

“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”

The path to Tarshish seems open and we sometimes think it must be the right way to go. Little do we know a fish is waiting around the corner to swallow us! Like Jonah, as we are paying the fare and getting on the ship, God is often ringing the doorbell and tapping on the window, wanting to say to us, if we will hear Him speak: “Don’t do it!!” But we do it anyway and make the wrong decision. Why? It’s because we have ulterior motives and are destined to do what we want to do in the end. We have our own understanding about the matter. John 6:63 says that “the flesh profiteth nothing.” Let us remember this!

Dear friend, don’t let the flesh and self-deception get in the way of God’s true guidance! We should learn to lean on Him by faith instead of leaning on our “own understanding.” The easiest person to deceive is ourselves. It’s hard on us when we take detours from the path that God has purposed for our lives. We create our own set of burdens when we reason things out in our own way, instead of God’s way, and embark on a journey that is not God’s will for our lives. We can hurt ourselves, our families, and our future when we take matters into our own hands! Don’t do it!

Berlin reports that an elderly British couple drove their Renault into the side of a church in Southern Germany after the car’s GPS system instructed them to turn right where there was no road. Confused, the couple didn’t recognize the misguided directions as a malfunction in the system and they obediently followed

the instructions. They spent a night in a hospital near the Austrian border, but fared better than their totaled car and decimated village church.

Don't follow a faulty GPS system! We need to follow God's GPS system (Godly Positioning System) which is screaming to us, "Turn here," but we sometimes ignore it, choosing instead to "suppress the truth" of God's loving guidance for our own way and will. And we end up no better than the poor British couple, wrecked and without a way home.

➤ **Choose to follow God's reasoning – 6 a-b.**

We must surrender or yield our entire lives to God (Rom. 12:1-2). We cannot know and experience God's true guidance for our lives or discern God's will for our lives when we are not fully yielded to His way and purpose for our journey. We must commit ourselves to the way God thinks and abandon our own irrational reasoning.

Notice:

a. The extent of our surrender ("in all thy ways" – 6a)

The expression "in all thy ways" (Prov. 3:6a) means that we must surrender to God's will and purpose for our lives in every area if we want God's true leading and direction. This means we must give God all the keys of our heart; give Him full sway and control over our lives. This is commitment without any reservation. We are not holding anything back. All thy ways! If we truly want God's guidance, we must learn to surrender to His will for every decision that we must make, every direction we must take, and in every difficult situation we must face.

We must surrender our lives to God's *general* will for our lives (sanctification) but also His *specific* will He has for our lives. When it comes to God's will, nothing must be ignored, if we want to receive God's true guidance. As we've seen, this would also include surrendering ourselves to God's purpose which sometimes involves passing through dark and difficult times. It's during the trials of life that we need to trust God and yield to His purpose, knowing that He is still, in His own sovereign way, will bring His purpose to pass in our lives (Rom. 8:28).

Someone said:

“Trust God in the light to find Him in the night”

When you trust in God “with all thine heart” (Prov. 3:5) you will give Him “all thy ways” (Prov. 3:6). Furthermore, you cannot get to “all thy ways” (surrendering everything to the Lord) without first trusting in the Lord “with all of thine heart.” This means that every decision, every direction, and every difficult situation you will turn over to the Lord so that He can give us guidance for today and in the future.

Sometimes we want to give God only part of our lives, instead of “all our ways” or every area of our lives. We will yield to Him in some specific area while neglecting some other area. God can’t guide us if we are not fully surrendered to Him and ready or prepared to follow His leading. There must be unreserved surrender. This is why we need to without any condition give Him “all our ways.”

“All of me, not a part but all of me.
All the heart and soul of me,
Jesus I surrender.
Take my life; be it poor or be it grand,
Let me live it by Your plan.
Shape it with Your hand.
All of me, through the ages yet to be,
I surrender, Lord, to Thee;
I surrender all of me.”

When someone asked William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, the secret of his success, Booth remained silent for several moments. Finally, with tear-filled eyes, he said, "There have been men with greater brains or opportunities than I, but I made up my mind that God would have all of William Booth there was."

b. The explanation of our surrender (“acknowledge him” – 6b)

When we “acknowledge” (Prov. 3:6b) something to God it means we are giving allegiance to God’s will and way for our lives. It means we are recognizing God’s sovereignty over our lives and are ready to follow His plan and guidance which He

gives to us. We are ready to obey His will whatever it might be. This is talking about surrendering to God's way and will for our lives.

Our problem is that we don't want Jesus Christ to be Lord over our lives. We want our own way, our own fling, our own thing, our own path, our own music, our own little sins. You cannot go both ways. It's either your way or God's way! You can't be neutral!

When we surrender to God's control, authority, and will for our lives, it means "all systems go!" We are ready to receive God's guidance. If you will yield to God, you can push the "green button" marked "start" and be ready for God to guide and lead your life.

When we acknowledge God we are really saying:

"All to Jesus I surrender;
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.
I surrender all,
I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all."

Surrender means that we acknowledge God's right to rule our lives. Nothing more is needed to receive God's true guidance. It takes absolute surrender! We will say, "God, you have the authority to guide me any way that You see fit. You are on the throne of my life, and You are my Lord and Master! Take me, I'm yours!"

Romans 12:1-2 speaks of absolute surrender:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice (*in total surrender to God*), holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

If we are not willing to place ourselves on God's altar, then we are not going to receive God's guidance ("prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"). Transformed thinking and living precedes God's true guidance. Holiness precedes knowing God's will. We often find ourselves in difficult predicaments in life because we have dug our own hole or grave (Ps. 40:2). We have not yielded to God's voice, and we are making our own decisions, instead of allowing God to guide us! If we are yielding to sin and our own way, then God cannot direct us! We cannot know God's will for our lives. Surrender and obedience is a prerequisite to knowing God's will and discovering God's guidance for our lives.

Jesus taught in Luke 9:23:

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

We need to reread the contract! These words speak for themselves. They are God's call to surrender. If we are not willing to die to our selfish ambitions, goals, and desires, then we are not going to receive God's guidance. We must acknowledge His right to run our lives! We must "acknowledge him" (Prov. 3:6) in everything. You are not in charge! God is to be in charge!

Jesus taught a similar principle in John 7:17:

"If any man will do his will (*if we are ready to do what God says*), he shall know of the doctrine (*we will know what the truth is*), whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Jesus was saying that if a person was willing to "do" what He was teaching, only then would they understand and know what He was teaching was divine or from God. It's interesting that Jesus did not say a person can know God's will and then decide whether he will do it. Our Lord taught that a man must be willing to "do his will" and then it will be revealed to him ("he shall know"). It's not knowing and then doing but doing and then knowing! Let's get the order right. Surrender comes first!

We can certainly draw some life application from what Jesus taught in this verse. Are we willing to do God's will even before we know it? To state is simply, we must be willing to follow God's path for our lives before He will reveal that path to our

lives. However, the wonderful promise is this; if we are willing to do God's will, it's then that we shall have God's direction.

Ralph Davis of the Africa Inland Mission once said:

"If we were as desirous of doing the will of God as we are of knowing the will of God, we would know it."

At a smorgasbord a person can see all the food and then choose what he wants. It's not like this when it comes to knowing God's will and receiving His guidance for our lives. God does not allow us to see it unless we are yielded to it. Here is the point. You cannot be guided by God unless you are surrendered to God! We must surrender to what God wants for our lives even before we know what it might be.

One day at Sunday school a little girl heard the story of Jesus' walk to Emmaus. She said, "Sometimes Jesus comes and walks with me wherever I am – on the sidewalk, at school, in the yard." When the teacher asked what she did, when Jesus came to walk with her, the little girl replied, "I just move over and make room for Him, so He can walk close to me."

Friend, are we allowing room for Jesus in our lives? Have we allowed Him to rule and reign in our daily decisions and activities? If we acknowledge His authority and lordship over our lives, God will keep His promise to direct all our ways.

God wants to guide our lives. We have seen how we need to prepare ourselves to receive God's guidance through faith and surrender. But there is another way we receive God's guidance.

II. In claiming God's promise of guidance – 6c

The promised result of possessing faith ("trust in the LORD") and surrendering to God ("in all thy ways acknowledge him") is now explained in this way: "he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6b). Of course, this looks back to both our faith and surrender to God's way and purpose for our life.

In other words, we must first possess an intense faith and undying devotion or unwavering commitment to the Lord's plan for our lives (vv. 5-6a) if we are going

to experience the promise or receiving God's guidance – "He shall direct thy paths" (6b). If we don't want God's direction we won't have it; however, if we step out in faith and surrender to Him, and are ready to obey His will, then we will have His guidance. This is His promise to us! God will guide our lives!

The Hebrew construction of the phrase "direct thy paths" means to literally "make straight thy paths." It gives the picture of all the debris being cleared away on a path so a person can know where to walk and what direction to go. This speaks of God clearing all the doubts away in our hearts and minds and giving us the assurance and reassurance what the will of God is for our lives.

I have a tree line that divides my yard from the cornfield. Between the two I have an area or pathway where I can walk. During the summer thorns and weeds grow there and after the winter dead tree limbs and leaves fall on the path. I often will clear out the path so I can once again see where to walk. I dig out the new growth and weed eat and open the path.

The point of the "straight path" analogy or picture is this: when God guides us He will clearly reveal which path to take. He will open the path for us and make a straight path that we can easily decipher and see. In one sense, He will clear away all the obstacles before us (in our hearts and minds) and make His will clearly known to us (we will have a settled conviction about it). There will be no mistake about it or second guessing it. The path will be clear, God's direction will be easy to see, uncomplicated, and certain. Folks, when we are surrendered to the Lord we are ready to be led by the Lord and the path will be opened before us.

God will certainly give us conviction and assurance within our hearts that we are following God's will. The outward path may sometimes be filled with trials and tests, but the inward path of our heart will have a clear direction and we will be reassured that we are embarking on the right path. The promise is that God will give us unmistakable conviction and direction when we are fully yielded to Him and His purpose for our lives. He will guide our lives or "direct thy paths" (make straight thy paths).

One of the beauties of the Christian life is this. Although God's path is not always easy it is always straightforward! God will clear away all the obstacles and debris and make His will known to us. He will openly reveal to us, or impress upon our

hearts, the path He wants us to walk. Beloved, when you see the straight path – take it! If you don't see it, just wait (Isa. 40:31). But don't create your own path! Let God straighten things out in your heart. God's guidance is always clear, sure, unmistakable, and convicting. It's not foggy, unsure, and hidden. If you are not sure about something, then God is not guiding you ("for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" – Rom. 14:23).

"He will direct thy paths." What a promise! Of course, as we express faith and surrender to God's will, He will choose to guide us through the Bible (Psalm 86:11; 119:14, 33-35; Ezra 7:10; 2 Tim. 3:16), prayer (Ps. 25:4; 86:11; Col. 1:9; 4:12; 1 John 5:14), advice of godly Christians (Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; 24:6; 27:17; 1 Kings 12:6), the inward peace of the Spirit (Acts 8:29; 11:12; 13:2, 4; 16:6-7; 20:22-23), the marvelous converging of circumstances (Gen. 24:10-15; 45:5-9; 50:19-20; Numbers 22:22, 23, 24, 26, 32, 34; Jonah 1:17; 1 Cor. 16:7-9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Rev. 3:7), or through a combination of these. If we wait, God will open the path, make a straight path for us; He will make the guidance so clear, that to refuse it, would be disobedience!

Are you ready to walk the path that God has ordained for you? Are you ready to claim the promise that says, "he shall direct thy paths" (make straight thy paths)? This is God's promise!

John Philips recalls the time God called him to Moody Bible Institute. This was many years ago. He remarks: "Little did I know years ago when I lived in northern British Columbia that God was about to change my life forever. One day I received a letter from a man I did not know. He was inviting me to come to a city I had never seen, to accept a position I didn't know existed, on terms I could not evaluate. The letter was from the director of Moody Correspondence School who invited me to come to Chicago to become the school's business manager. To accept the invitation seemed impossible at the time. I was married, my wife Jean and I had three small children, and we had recently built a new house. We had started a church, were planning to erect a building, and were discipling new converts. Jean did not want to go since all her family lived in British Columbia. Chicago had a terrible reputation. We were happy and involved where we were.

"Following the advice of Stephen Olford I visited Chicago and the Lord was beginning to direct my paths. I was impressed with the school and became

convinced that we should go. But when I returned home I found that Jean was equally unconvinced.

“I said to the Lord, ‘If you want us to go to Chicago, You must convince Jean. You have convinced me, now convince her.’ Several months passed. I continued to work as an accountant for a lumber company owned by dear friend of mine. Our infant church flourished. The director of the correspondence school was willing to wait. Most mornings I had my coffee breaks with my friend but one morning I decided to have coffee break with my wife instead. As I opened the door of our house, Jean met me in the hall. She was all smiles. ‘Guess what!’ she said, ‘We’re going to Chicago.’ Within six months we obtained our United States papers and we were on our way. A tremendous young couple took our place in the church and the man also took over my job. The work continued to grow.

“The Lord continued to direct our path. Within six months I was put in charge of all course development. This assignment honed my writing gifts. I was given my own program on the Moody radio network. I began writing articles for Moody Monthly and teaching at the Moody Evening School. Churches opened their doors to me and I developed preaching skills. My wife found fulfillment too in some wonderful new friendships and in becoming a partner in my work as an author. She proofreads all my manuscripts, corrected my mistakes, and steers me away from a mere masculine point of view! ... The Lord is eminently worthy of our trust!”

To this I say, “Amen!” Do you really trust Him? How strong is your faith? Are you ready to really surrender to Him? God wants to guide our lives. He wants to be lord over our daily decisions and the directions that we take in life. When we place our complete confidence or trust in God, to direct us, and when we yield to His way for our life, it’s then we can be sure to receive His guidance.

Proverbs 3:5-6

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Before finishing this study, let’s put the truth of these beloved verses in capsule form and revolve them all around the importance of our faith in the Lord. When it

comes to receiving God's guidance it all begins with faith. Am I willing to trust God?

Confident faith ("trust in the Lord" – Prov. 3:5).

Complete faith ("with all thine heart" – Prov. 3:5).

Committed faith ("acknowledge him" – Prov. 3:6).

Crowning faith ("and he shall direct thy paths" – Prov. 3:6).

1. **Confident faith ("trust in the Lord" – Prov. 3:5).**

We are not to trust in people, friends, our own wisdom, ability, feelings, or experiences. We must ultimately trust in the Lord for guidance and direction in life. It's easy to trust God when all is going well, but we find it harder when we face insurmountable obstacles, disappointments, and frustrations. Yes, during these experiences we can say, as Job did, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). God never makes a mistake. He never fails. We can count on the faithfulness of God. Psalm 118:8 declares: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

"Not for one single day
Can I discern my way,
But this I surely know—
He who gives the day
Will show the way,
So I securely go."

2. **Complete faith ("with all thine heart" – Prov. 3:5).**

We cannot rely on our own insight or human wisdom. Our wisdom falls short (1 Cor. 1:30). We must totally rely on God's wisdom and know that whatever He allows to come into our lives is part of His grand purpose in the never-ending circle of life (Rom. 8:28). We can trust God fully and completely ("with all thine heart").

3. Committed faith ("acknowledge him" – Prov. 3:6).

This once again speaks of total commitment to the Lord's will and way for our lives. It takes faith to acknowledge God's purpose and recognize that He is in control and knows what is best for our lives. Again, to "acknowledge" God means to recognize His lordship over our lives and to welcome Him in all of our experiences. We will not take any hidden trail but are willing to walk the path that God has ordained for us, even when that path means pain and testing. We should always be ready to follow the path and calling of God for our lives. In doing this, we release to Him our ambitions, choices, decisions, friendships, habits, and surrender everything to Him. We acknowledge God's right to rule and run our lives as He sees fit.

Someone said:

"We acknowledge God in the affections of our heart, the contemplations of our mind, the expressions of our lips, and the deportment of our life."

4. Crowning faith ("and he shall direct thy paths" – Prov. 3:6).

The crown or reward of our faith is that God will direct us in the path He wants us to go. The Bible speaks of many who allowed God to direct their paths. For instance, when the children of Israel were to enter the Promised Land, Joshua gave them direction, saying: "that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore" (Joshua 3:4). Yes, we can know the way! In everything we do, we should put God first, and he will direct our paths and crown (reward) all our efforts with guidance and success.

What a promise! God will direct our paths! Claim it today and allow God to open His paths before you. Life is an exciting adventure when we are surrendered to the Lord and allowing Him to direct and guide our lives on a daily basis. God wants to

open a whole new life and world to you that revolves around His guidance, will, and purpose for your life. Our prayer and desire should be that of the hymn writer.

“Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.”